



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

M-359A

Date: February 22, 1990

In reply refer to: M-90-8

Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr.  
Commandant  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Washington, D.C. 20593

At approximately 0820, on August 29, 1988, the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69), while entering the harbor at Hampton Roads, Virginia, struck the anchored Spanish bulk carrier URDULIZ. The URDULIZ was anchored adjacent to the Entrance Reach Channel waiting for a berth at the coal loading piers at Lamberts Point, Norfolk, Virginia. The EISENHOWER was returning to its home port of Norfolk, Virginia, after a 6-month deployment in the Mediterranean Sea. No one was injured. The accident resulted in \$2 million in estimated damage to the EISENHOWER and \$317,128 in damage to the URDULIZ.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the accident, the URDULIZ was anchored in a designated anchorage (anchorage "A," berth "Z") with its bow about 400 yards from what had been the northern edge of the Entrance Reach Channel prior to March 30, 1988, or about 200 yards from the new channel edge established by buoy relocations on March 30, 1988. The preplanned track of the EISENHOWER in the Entrance Reach Channel was to follow the northern edge of the previous 1,500-foot-wide channel (this was also the southern limits of anchorages "A" and "B"). The EISENHOWER bridge watch was aware that the URDULIZ was anchored in berth "Z," as the bridge watch had been informed about 1 hour before the accident by a naval vessel preceding the EISENHOWER into Norfolk. Visibility was at least 5 miles, and the bridge watch had the URDULIZ in sight for about 30 minutes before the accident.

It is difficult for the conning crew of a vessel using the Entrance Reach Channel to determine visually the new northern edge of the channel because there is no navigation aid in the 3.2 miles between Thimble Shoal Channel Lighted Buoy "22" (buoy "22") on the eastern end of the channel and Newport News Channel Lighted Buoy "2" (buoy "2") on the western end of the

<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Ramming of Spanish Bulk Carrier URDULIZ by the USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER at Hampton Roads, Virginia, August 29, 1988" (NTSB/MAR-90/01).

channel. Even though the anchorage berths on the northern side of the Entrance Reach Channel have water depths in excess of 50 feet, they should not be considered extensions of the channel width, but rather areas where vessels are expected to be anchored and thus unavailable for maneuvering outside of the channel limits. Proper marking of the northern edge of the channel is more critical because the channel has been narrowed and there is now less width available to maneuver a vessel.

The Safety Board does not agree with the statement by the Coast Guard witness that "...when you put buoys near an anchorage they get run over and serve only as a hazard to navigation." Vessels are expected to safely pass each other in the 1,000-foot-wide channel, and therefore, placing buoys about 1 mile apart along the northern edge of the channel should not interfere with a vessel navigating the channel or entering the anchorages to anchor. Further, if a vessel were to strike a buoy, the damage cost to the buoy and the vessel would be far less expensive than the damage cost resulting from even a minor collision between two vessels. The Coast Guard already uses buoys to mark channels adjacent to anchorages in Norfolk and in other harbors.

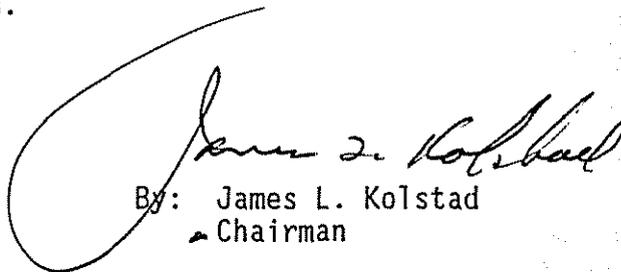
Not only would additional buoys on the channel's northern edge provide a channel marking, they could also be used by mariners to visually estimate their vessel's position and how the vessel's course is being affected by wind and current. The presence of additional buoys, for example, 1 mile apart may have provided an earlier indication to the conning crew that the EISENHOWER was deviating from its intended course, allowing corrective action to be taken earlier, perhaps even in time to avoid the collision. The Safety Board believes that the northern edge of the Entrance Reach Channel should be marked with additional buoys to assist the mariner visually in determining the channel limits and his movement in the channel.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard:

Establish additional buoys on the northern side of the Entrance Reach Channel to delineate the channel limits.  
(Class II, Priority Action) (M-90-8)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-90-1 through -7 to the U.S. Navy and reiterated M-88-38 to the Navy.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.



By: James L. Kolstad  
Chairman